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HOMEMAKERS' CHAT

Saturday, December 2, 1939

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "THOUGHTFUL CHRISTMAS GIFTS." Information from the Bureau of Chemistry and Agricultural Engineering, the Bureau of Animal Industry, Forest Service, the Bureau of Home Economics, and the Extension Office, United States Department of Agriculture.

--ooOoo--

Today let's talk about Christmas presents. Let's talk about presents that cost little to make but get a hearty welcome just the same.

Homemade gifts have taken a lot of joking in recent years. You've heard about the socks Daughter knits that give Dad corns and blisters. You've heard about the gaudy tidies and doilies Aunt Tilly embroiders and the relatives hide until Aunt Tilly comes to visit. You've heard about the dreary-looking homemade candy no one wants to eat. You've heard these jokes and plenty more about the gifts that cost time and money to make and still went astray.

But homemade gifts don't have to be jokes and mistakes. They can be the most welcome gifts around the Christmas tree. In spite of all the jokes, the gift to keep the old-fashioned Christmas spirit alive is the one made by loving hands and kind thoughts.

The familiar Christmas motto: "It's the thought that counts," may sound trite and sentimental. Actually it is good practical advice for anyone making Christmas gifts. The thought behind the gift may give it more value than the money you spend. Careful thought may give you ideas for different and original gifts. Careful thought may help you discover the special wants and needs of your friends.

Suppose I tell you about some of the thoughtful gifts friends have told me about.



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My neighbor says the gifts she appreciated most last year were a couple of housecleaning labor-savers made by her children. Her daughter made a set of dustless dustcloths for her, and her young son fixed up a basket for carrying cleaning supplies from job to job around the house.

Maybe you'd like to hear how the daughter made the dustless cloths. She cut cotton flannel in 24-inch squares and hemmed the edges. Then she put the cloth in a tight tin can with a tablespoon or so of kerosene and paraffin oil. She let the cloth stay closed in the can until it absorbed that little bit of oil and was just moist enough to pick up dust better than a dry cloth. The daughter painted the can a bright Christmas red so her mother could use it as a permanent container for the dust cloth. (She knew that oily rags may be a fire risk unless they are in a safe place like a metal can.)

Perhaps you'd also like to hear about the cleaning basket the young son made. He painted one of those small grape baskets with handles. Then he put in partitions and fitted the basket with a whisk broom, dustcloth, furniture polish, work gloves and the other odds and ends every housewife needs on her housecleaning rounds.

Now here's an idea for making some old familiar homemade articles different. If you are making aprons or pot holders for gifts, make them fireproof. It is easy to fireproof any washable fabric. Dip the cloth in a solution of 3 parts boric acid and 7 parts borax and hot water. When it dries, it won't scorch or burn. (You can fireproof kitchen curtains and ironing board covers the same way. If you want directions, write to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C., for Farmers' Bulletin No. 1786 called "Fireproofing Fabrics." It is free while the supply lasts.)

Speaking of bulletins reminds me of another thoughtful gift for the housewife, or for the man of the house -- a cardboard binder or case to hold a set of bulletins together for handy reference. Such a bulletin library will



find a welcome place on a desk or on the kitchen shelf. You can cover the cardboard with attractive paper and paste the names of the bulletins on the back.

The possibilities of homemade gifts for children are too many even to begin to mention. Dolls dressed by mother; blocks and swings and doll houses and doll furniture built by father have gladdened children at Christmas through the centuries. Nowadays you can get directions for making just the right toys for children from the extension service at most State colleges. The home demonstration agent in your county will help you, too. One favorite homemade gift for a child that will please his mother as well is a wooden box on wheels to hold all his toys. A box like this is a child's own private trailer. It carries all his possessions wherever he travels around the house or out in the yard, and, incidentally, keeps the toys off the floor and out of mother's way.

If you live on a farm you have more opportunities than anyone else to make gifts. Food gifts from the farm can be rich treats to town relatives and friends. Homemade sausage or scrapple or headcheese is often hard to buy at any price in town. As for delicacies like old ham and smoked turkey, they're almost worth their weight in gold to an epicure. (You know you can get directions for making all these meat products by writing to the Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. The directions for making smoked turkey are new -- just published recently.)

Meal or flour ground between mill stones has now become a luxury food to many city people. You'd be surprised at the price even small sacks bring. So friends who long for homemade bread and griddle cakes like Grandmother's will appreciate a gift of whole-grain cornmeal, or wheat, or rye, or buckwheat flour ground in the old-fashioned way.

Other possibilities for gifts from the farm are homemade sirups like maple or sorgo sirup, popcorn put up in cans to keep it moist enough to pop well, aromatic herbs for seasoning or for fragrance, bags of nuts or even pine cones to kindle the Christmas fire. These are just a few of the many thoughtful Christmas gifts that cost little but may be worth much.

